Kick out the Jams

By Lester Bangs
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Whoever thought when that dirty little quickie *Wild in the Streets* came out that it would leave such an imprint on the culture? First the Doors (who were always headed in that direction anyway) grinding out that famous "They-got-the-guns-but-we-got-the-numbers" march for the troops out there in Teenland, and now this sweaty aggregation. Clearly this notion of violent, total youth revolution and takeover is an idea whose time has come — which speaks not well for the idea but ill for the time.

About a month ago the MC-5 received a cover article in *Rolling Stone* proclaiming them the New Sensation, a group to break all barriers, kick out all jams, "total energy thing," etc. etc. etc. Never mind that they came on like a bunch of 16 years old punks on a meth power trip - these boys, so the line ran, could play their guitars like John Coltrane and Pharaoh Sanders played sax!

Well, the album is out now and we can all judge for ourselves. For my money they come on more like Blue Cheer than Trane and Sanders, but then my money has already gone for a copy of this ridiculous, overbearing, pretentious album; and maybe that's the idea, isn't it ?

The set, recorded live, starts out with an introduction by John Sinclair, "Minister of Information" for the "White Panthers," if you can dig that. The speech itself stands midway between *Wild in the Streets* and Arthur Brown. The song that follows it is anticlimactic. Musically the group is intentionally crude and aggressively raw. Which can make for powerful music except when it is used to conceal a paucity of ideas, as it is here. Most of the songs are barely distinguishable from each other in their primitive two-chord structures. You've heard all this before from such notables as the Seeds, Blue Cheer, Question Mark and the Mysterians, and the Kingsmen. The difference here, the difference which will sell several hundred thousand copies of this album, is in the hype, the thick overlay of teenage-revolution and total- energy-thing which conceals these scrapyard vistas of clichés and ugly noise.

”Kick Out The Jams" sounds like Barret Strong's "Money" as recorded by the Kingsmen. The lead on "Come Together" is stolen note-for-note from the Who's "I Can See for Miles." "I Want You Right Now" sounds exactly (down to the lyrics) like a song called "I Want You" by the Troggs, a British group who came on with a similar sex-and-raw-sound image a couple of years ago (remember "Wild Thing"?) and promptly disappeared into oblivion, where I imagine they are laughing at the MC-5.